SHEFFIELD AND HER WHISTLE,

OR THE

FIRST FRUITS OF THE CORPORATION.

TO THE

WORSHIPFUL THOMAS DUNN,

ALDERMAN OF THE PARK WARD.

"Honour to whom honour is due."

BY SAMUEL ROBERTS,

THE PAUPER'S ADVOCATE.

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SHEFFIELD AND HER WHISTLE, &c.

May it please your Worship, — Though I have lived more than four score years in Sheffield, I have (happily) never, till very lately, had to puzzle myself about applying proper titles beyond Mr. Master Cutler. I am, therefore, afraid that I may not have addressed you correctly. With genealogy I am not so well acquainted as our townsman, Mr. Hunter. I knew, however, your father and your grandfather. The latter (I should think the last of the race in Sheffield) was—by repute—a *Conjuror* or *Cunningman*. Of the family of a late Magistrate, of whom, in your maiden speech as Alderman—you (as you did at the Cutlers' Hall, some months ago,) eulogized to an extent that drew forth loud applause, I know nothing beyond his grandfather (who was then, I believe, a blacksmith, at Norton,) to whom a great uncle of mine lent £400, to enable him to give his son a liberal education. This my unacquaintedness with genealogy must be my excuse if I should, (as I fear that I may) make any blunders in addressing either you or any other of the members of the Honorable novel Corporation of Sheffield.*

The first important question for the benefit of the town seems to have been the deciding on an appropriate Common Seal for the Corporation. On this subject many aldermanic sage remarks were made, but none so wise, I think, as your Worship's, viz., "That the *Seal* should be plain, though handsome, and (for some reason or other) devoid of *latin*." In this I fully agree. The subject being highly important to the future welfare of the town, I have been induced to turn my thoughts to it, and to suggest a design to you, which I think highly applicable, and exactly according with your ideas. As relates to the proper size, the worshipful Corporation are the best judges; only, to be useful, it should not be too small. I here give you a sketch of it. This Cap, made of check linen, was called a *pudding poke cap*, and was formerly worn—along with a buff leathern apron, turned down with a scarlet flap—by the first manufacturers in Sheffield, when they had done their work, as an evening dress,

* One will be afraid now of going into a shop for fear of offending the shopkeeper by not giving him his due title.

and worn even at *Church* on the Sabbath-day. I think, *too*, by some at the *Cutlers' Feast*, when the Marquis of Rockingham was wont to take the Company down after dinner, to treat them with punch at the Old George Inn, from the windows of which he scattered money among the humbler tribes of cutlers below. I think then your Worship will approve of the suggestion, both as relates to the device and the motto, the former is appropriate, and the latter so short and simple that I think that most of the Town *Councillors* will be able to make it out. This I propose to be the costume of the Aldermen, as being peculiar to Sheffield.

Though your Worship, I doubt not, considers the subject of which I have been treating, as highly important, there is another to which I have to allude which is much more so. In proposing a vote of thanks to the Magistrates of the West Riding, "who," you stated, "had spent long, and useful, and honourable, and (for Sheffield) most beneficial lives," you select and hold up as the *most* exemplary instance, one of them who, though "*unfortunate*," was, you stated "*a man to whom Sheffield owed a* GREATER *debt of gratitude for the time, impartiality, and industry, in the service of the town, than to any other.*" Please your Worship, I think that you was then saying *that which is* NOT! I recollect that at the first meeting of the creditors of Messrs. Parker, Shore, and Co., you went even much greater and more mischievous lengths in eulogising the same gentleman, and in assuring the desponding creditors present that, *to your own knowledge*, the Bankrupts had assets enough and much more than enough, to pay all. Now, your Worship either did, or did not, believe what you asserted. If you did believe it, (not *knowing* it) you could not be a *wise* man. If then you stated it, not *believing* it, what were you? This I will not say. But I can tell you that your imprudence (to call it by no worse a name,) was to many individuals, highly injurious, but to none, perhaps, more so than to the parties whom you meant to serve. I fear that your Worship is possessed of more *sound* than *substance*. I expect that your account with the Bank at the time of the failure was not *very* large.

You must not suppose that my opinion respecting the conduct, and service to the town, of the gentleman to whom you allude, has been formed since the dreadful failure of their Bank. You must know, at any rate your *Father* knew, that I pub-

licly declared, perhaps twenty years ago, my conviction that his conduct and services had long been most highly prejudicial. That his conduct since then has not been better, has been of late most lamentably proved both at Leeds and at Sheffield. After which, your now reiterated commendation of him (though applauded by Aldermen) is as insulting and disgusting as it is uncalled for and untrue.

You call for commiseration! for whom? for the inflictor of misery, or for his victims? The number of the latter (the most deserving of their class) who have been (robbed I was going to say) deprived by the imprudence—(I was going to use a harsher term)—of the former, of their livelihood, are almost incalculable. Aged widows, industrious workmen, steady servants, with their one, two, or three hundred pounds savings, have lost half of it! This, to my knowledge, has been the case, for some of them had been in my service; while others, poor men with large families, who had laid by a five pound note to pay their rent with, fared the same. These poor, good, honest people, your Worship, are the people whom *I* pity—not the man who, for, perhaps, twenty years, had been knowingly living on *the property of others*, and not only so, but portioning his dependents off with it. What are such men but PAUPERS—paupers of the worst description, and, yet, under the *infernal New Poor Law*, such men have been known daringly to take their seats, and even to *preside*, in depriving of necessary food, it may be, the very worthy persons driven by them to poverty.

What, please your Worship, are men who cannot pay their just debts? Ask those who are perishing in the *Bastile* because *they could* not pay *their* creditors in full; and yet these poor persons had perhaps stinted themselves and their families for years, to the simplest and most scanty food, in order *that they might pay all*—yet a great pauper—*their oppressor*—(with a hundred thousand pounds unpaid) may still be living in luxury, and be highly spoken of. What does your Worship think of these things? I would be no respecter of persons, but if I was inclined to be so, it should be to the *honest poor*.

I do not know of anything more prejudicial to a town like this, than the confounding, in practice and in praise, *right* and *wrong*,—than the calling of evil good, and good evil. A more uncalled for, obtrusive, and insulting instance of this, I

think, never was—never could be—exhibited than was by your Worship on this occasion. The whole town were suffering from, and disgusted with, conduct the very reverse of what you described it to have been, and yet one of the first instances of the *wisdom* and *usefulness* of this sapient Corporation, was the applauding the character and proceedings of a man who, almost twenty years ago, I publicly affirmed had then been one of its greatest enemies—that opinion remains uncontroverted, while the reprobated conduct has since been tenfold aggravated, and tenfold more injurious, without, as far as I know, any cause for palliation.

Your Worship has now become a *great man*, while I remain a little one; but I still claim—as *an Octogenarian of Sheffield*, and a Christian devoting time and property to her service—as great a right to declare my sentiments in *writing* as you have to declare yours in *declamation*.

I became intimately acquainted with the gentleman now alluded to, almost before you was born. Forty years ago, when I was Overseer of the Poor, I dedicated a pamphlet to him, on the subject of rebuilding the *poor, little, old Workhouse*, in which we had about forty inmates. He had then just qualified as a Magistrate. I addressed it to him as one whom (as I stated) I *trusted* would become a worthy successor to the then aged Vicar of Sheffield, as a Magistrate I am sorry to say—notwithstanding your bold (I suspect biassed) assertions to the contrary—my *trust* has proved unfounded. The money that *I* have lost by his failure, you know, is not trifling—after my having done (as he has admitted) what no other person ever did during sixty years—in support of the Bank; but I assert that the loss of that money has never given me the tenth part of the annoyance that his conduct, both as a Gentleman and a Magistrate, did during many years, in frustrating me—by failure of promises (though with the utmost politeness)—in my attempts to benefit my fellow creatures, particularly in this my native town.

About fifteen years ago, I published, on several occasions, and in different ways, my complaints of his conduct, all of which remain to this day uncontroverted. These publications are still in existence, and if your Worship wishes it, they shall be sent to you.

Your Worship is not unacquainted with my strenuous endeavours, during many years, to purify or abolish that greatest

curse that ever was inflicted on Sheffield, till she became cursed with a *New Poor Law*, and now with a *Corporation*, I mean the COURT OF REQUESTS. To the failure of success in those efforts, I am indebted to the deceitful promises of *your* "DEARLY BELOVED." As to his conduct as a *Magistrate* (though always in appearance and language a gentleman), ask any of his colleagues, but principally ask any of the *Overseers of the Poor* under the Old Law, who then had much to do with him—not one but will tell you that they never knew what his opinion would be the next week, as he was continually "promising to the ear and failing to the hope." Now, your Worship, I take no pleasure in publishing these complaints of one who, after all, is greatly to be pitied, as all men are who do wrong. But you have compelled me to it, by your almost insanely holding up (even after the evidence adduced at Leeds) the conduct of a man to the admiration, imitation, and applause of this now immensely large, populous, and suffering town; which if generally or even frequently imitated, would shortly bring it to ruin. What your Worship's motives may be, is probably known only fully to God—but that you are, in this case, influenced by motives by which others are not, is evident to all. You hold him up and sustain him there, as being (as a man, as a tradesman, and as a magistrate,) not only highly praiseworthy, but as one standing, in all those respects, so pre-eminent as to call for the admiration, imitation, and *acclamation* of all the now *Great Men* of the town. It was shouted accordingly. And this you have dared to do, after you, as assignee, (knowing all the affairs of the Bank) had heard the whole of the exposure at Leeds. Are we then to suppose that the conduct which you so much applaud, and call so loudly on others to applaud, *is what you* (now you are become a man in authority) YOURSELF *mean to practice?* Do you mean to say that you call upon the Bankers, with whom your money may now be lodged to act in the same manner? Did you mean to call upon the *Mayor*, the *Aldermen*, and the *Councillors* to go and do likewise? Do you wish for the example to be held up for imitation to all the merchants and manufacturers of what was once—proverbially—"HONEST SHEFFIELD"? What do you mean? Do you mean that we should *out-Jonathan Jonathan?* A pretty beginning this—your Worship!—of our new WORSHIPFUL (a blasphemous term)

Corporation? A pretty auxiliary of the *New Poor Law* this is likely to become, for the bringing out, creating, and employing of RASCALS* of every description!

You well know that during almost ten years, I have, by "*Rascally Publications*," been predicting the ruin of this country. The occurrences of every year have tended to prove (by other things as well as by your *Corporation*) that those predictions have been well founded. The nature of Englishmen seems totally changed! They unconcernedly see the free constitution of the country violated. The Laws of God set out of the question, and opposed by legislative authority: they see millions of their unoffending fellow creatures unjustly consigned to the vilest of slavery, to famine, misery, death, and mangling, while they (revelling in folly and guilt) open not their mouths in reprobation. They see almost every measure of Government tending more to enrich the rich, and more to impoverish the poor, by means which are calculated to increase and to employ *villains* in every authoritative department throughout the kingdom, in a degree that deters all respectable, honest men, from being associated with them.

Your Worship cannot but perceive and admit, that I am not thus addressing you without the most urgent necessity. My character for discernment, honesty, and veracity has been brought into question by your thus, in your doubly official public character, repeatedly affirming that the man whose character and conduct I had, during twenty years, been reprobating, was in every department, not only an excellent but a *most* excellent man, and, of course, worthy of universal imitation. One of us then must be most highly criminal. The fall of that individual, dreadfully afflictive as it was in its consequences, to hundreds and thousands, might have called for some degree of commiseration, had it not led to the divulging of such long previous misconduct, as really horrified the feelings of every honest man, and stopped every mouth, *but one*, that would have been disposed to palliate it. You have, however, put an effectual stop to all such feelings by your uncalled-for dragging the individual forward on such an occasion by the head and shoulders, to be exposed, with yourself, to the notice and remarks of the whole town.

* You know to whom I am indebted for this *word*, but I do not see his name among your tribe. Perhaps he may be better employed.

I have long perceived that you are too fond of talking. One great advantage of not having more than four Overseers under the Old Poor Law was, that there was neither time nor temptation to *talk*. We had once in Sheffield a great talker, but then *he* was a benevolent man, with a clear head and a strong mind In *talking* you resemble him, for I think one-third of the talking at the late meetings was yours. I remember during one of the said gentleman's long speeches, an honest Quaker, who had some short important remarks to make, waited long patiently in vain; till, taking advantage of a pause, he slowly arose and said, 'Verily, friend *****, thou art, I perceive, all *mouth* and no *ear!*'

I was always aware of the great evils of a CORPORATION. You have now got your WHISTLE. *The* PRICE *of it however remains to be paid!* The path of folly is often long, as well as dirty—it always *ends* with ill, but I never knew one *begin* so ill as this, in calling upon the people of a large trading town like this (as they wish to be held up to the admiration, the imitation, and the applause of the TOWN COUNCIL) to dispose of all the available property that they can lay their hands on, in such a way as that it may come to them again, when, after paying their creditors ten shillings in the pound, they may retire, and live as *gentlemen* most highly esteemed.

I can assure your Worship that had it not been for your thus strangely dragging the delinquent before the public, I might never have referred to him again, as I have hitherto avoided it; but when you thus seek to exalt him to the encouragement of misconduct, I feel called upon to protect the town, and to defend myself and truth. If you only want failures in business, I am persuaded that neither the Guardians, the Councillors, nor even the Aldermen, will eventually wholly disappoint you. They may not fail to the same amount, and therefore not to the same adulation. I know that as the killer of one man is a murderer, the killer of thousands is a hero: so the man who fails in trade for a few hundreds is cast into prison, while he who fails for hundreds of thousands lives luxuriously and is eulogised, and applauded by assembled Aldermen.

POSTSCRIPT.

THOUGH I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statements contained in the following Letter received by the post—it being anonymous—the hand-writing is not attempted to be disguised, and I dare say that the writer, if called upon to do so, would give his name :—

"Sheffield, Thursday Morning.

"TO SAMUEL ROBERTS, ESQ."

"SIR,—I was so much pleased with the very merited castigation of Mr. Alderman Dunn, in your late twopenny pamphlet, that I am induced to trouble you with a few hints for a second volume, to be dedicated to the same *worthy*. I happened to be at the meeting of Council, on Wednesday, at the Cutlers' Hall—when the "Administration of Justice" Committee made their report. Alderman Dunn was chairman of the same committee—their duties were to recommend a certain number of gentlemen, as fit and proper persons to be included in the Commission of the Peace for the Borough of Sheffield. The Committee consisted of the following :—The Mayor, Aldermen Dunn, Lowe, Butcher, Moorhouse, George Turton, William Vickers; and Councillors William Jackson, Bradley, and G. H. Woollen. The first six only attended the committee, but who very modestly recommended Aldermen Jeffcock, Dunn, and Elias Lowe, (family connexions) Butcher, and Vickers—four out of the six, who attended in committee, actually *recommended themselves*. On Alderman Dunn being asked for the names of the whole of the gentlemen from whom the following 21 names had been selected, viz. :—Saml. Bailey, *Samuel Butcher*, Richard Bailey, Dr. Branson, Thomas Creswick, *THOS. DUNN*, Michael Ellison, Samuel Hadfield, George Hounsfield, WM. JEFFCOCK, ELIAS LOWE, JOHN MARSH, John Rodgers, John Read, Samuel Roberts, jun., Rev. T. Sutton, Robert Sorby, Alfred Sorby, WM. VICKERS, JOHN WOODCROFT, and George Younge,—this, Mr. Dunn refused, the Councillor pressed for it, stating that he could not give his sanction to the "report" unless he could know whether the "most fit and proper" persons had been selected; but Alderman Dunn would not give the names of those whom they had rejected,

not wishing to "*hurt the feelings*" of those gentlemen, by exposing their names, and thus letting the Burgesses into the secrets of the Committee Room. Thus Alderman Dunn, as Chairman, had the modesty to recommend, not only himself, but two other of his relations to be Magistrates of this Borough; also four other *Aldermen*, all fitter for the *Queen's Bench*, than a Bench of Magistrates. The result was, the Council refused to receive the report, and it was postponed to the next meeting to be *amended*. I must not forget to mention to you that at the election for Aldermen, that three of these would-be-Magistrates, actually voted for themselves for Aldermen, as their voting papers will shew, viz. Woodcroft, Lowe, and Vickers. Mr. Alderman Dunn requested the reporters would leave out the *names* of the gentlemen who had been recommended—very modest indeed! When they found the Council would not confirm the report, so that the names of Messrs. Dunn and Co. will not appear in the newspapers.

"There is another matter, I think, wants naming to Mr. Dunn, as one of Parker and Shore's Assignees; whilst they are pressing every little debtor, and breaking up lots of their old friends, there is one man who owes the Bank above £11,900, and who is allowed to PAY IT OFF by £15 a week; now as the interest is near £600, he is paying little more than interest; but this is not the worst of it—they are allowing this man to get into other people's debts, to enable him to pay them £15 a week. Is this justice to the rest of the debtors? Is it justice to the creditors at large, of Parker, Shore, and Co., to let this man pay all his creditors 20s. in the pound, and the estate of Parker, Shore, and Co., only interest of money, or a little more, for a debt of nearly £12,000? Now this man, his wife, and daughter, keep their own carriage, ride and drive about as if they were worth their thousands; insulting the poor creditors, a many of them, as you justly observe, poor old people, aged servants, &c. I know no one who has the spirit and independence to search into these matters, but yourself. The town, the country at large, is your debtor, to an incalculable extent. Excuse this hastily written scrawl; it is from one of the sufferers, *by Mr. Dunn's excellent friend*, Parker."

Whether the statements of the foregoing letter be correct or not, I am not able to say, but I apprehend that Mr.

Alderman Dunn—can in both instances vouch for them, if correct, refute them if false, or defend them if he thinks them right. One good turn deserves another, and I do not know that the Alderman DICTATOR is deficient in gratitude. Perhaps when summer comes he will not be so noisy and overwhelming as he has been.

So far, however, I have only been able to compare him to his (almost) namesake "the *Gulphy Dun*," (I spell it in the old way,) which in stormy weather comes roaring down from the rude Penistone Moors, muddy and frightfully noisy, till it encounters the poor, quiet, timid SHEAF, which it absolutely swallows as a boa would a deer, horns and all, and then goes off with it in its belly, to do what it will with it. I see that like all little men just got into great places, the new men in office have already displayed their dispositions to be very liberal with the *money of the public*. I think that there should be some restriction as relates to the length and number of speeches made by each member of the Corporation in the same meeting, else we may have our newspapers nearly filled with what has been called (for what reason Alderman THOMAS *Dunn* can probably tell) TOM *Foolery*.

I expect that the Worshipful Alderman, as well as myself, has read the Report of the proceedings of the Leeds Court of Bankruptcy on the 13th Inst. I should be glad to know what the Alderman thinks of them, as well as what he would have thought of them had the Bankrupts *happened* to have owed him £5,000 instead of £5.

I remember being told, when a child, that a man whom I knew, living in Coalpit-lane, of the name of *Johnny Ash*, *was the first Sheffield Bankrupt*. Whether Johnny ever got HIS *certificate* or not, I really cannot tell—nor do I think that it much signified to him, he appeared to be poor enough. But things are changed in Sheffield since Johnny's time, or else we should not have been favoured with quite so much of *Alderman Dunn's eloquence* in approval of Bankruptcy;—yet I dare say that Johnny did not fail for above £100,000, nor did I hear of any thing dishonourable being imputed to him. I never heard who was Johnny's solicitor.

It will appear by the following Dedication of a pamphlet on the subject of the Workhouse, (written forty years ago,) to Hugh Parker, Esq., that I am not disposed to speak ill of any one, till by misconduct they compel me so to do. It

will serve to shew too, that the subject of the *Poor Laws* is not new to me:—

TO HUGH PARKER, Esq.

One of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the West Riding of the County of York, and Captain Commandant of the two Troops of Sheffield West Riding Yeomanry Cavalry.

Sir,—In prefixing your name, without leave, to this trifling performance, it is certainly requisite to assign a plausible reason for taking such a liberty; and it will no doubt appear sufficient, that in the prosecution of the plan here recommended, the Overseers do, and must look up to you for considerable assistance; and they do it with confidence, knowing, that if it appear to you to be the Cause of Humanity, your co-operation and sanction will not be withheld: for on whom can they depend for support in such a cause, if not on those whose conduct in every situation and relation of public and private life is exemplary?

As a Magistrate, you seem destined by Providence to be a worthy successor to one of the most beneficent of human beings, one of the most indefatigable, just, and impartial Magistrates with whom this or any other neighbourhood was ever favoured:—one whom we still hope it will please God long to spare, as a bright example to you, and a blessing to all within the sphere of his influence.

As a Soldier, we can only yet say that you are attentive in the discharge of your duty, and esteemed and respected by all under your command; but should your country call on you to meet her foe, we feel confident that you will evince that true and cool courage which springs from a consciousness of the justice of our cause, and a reliance on the blessing of our God; and prove that, when circumstances require it, you can defend your country with your sword, as you have hitherto done by your conduct, for A good Man is his Country's best Defender. That you may enjoy a long, happy, and useful life, is the wish and prayer of

Sir, your obedient humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

A. WHITAKER AND CO., PRINTERS, IRIS-OFFICE, FARGATE